

Senate Joint Resolution No. 20

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 58

Senate Joint Resolution No. 20—Relative to violence against women.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 21, 2012.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 20, Evans. Violence Against Women Act.

This measure would call on the United States Congress to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2011, Senate Bill No. 1925, authored by Senators Leahy and Crapo, and ensure the sustainability of vital programs designed to keep women and families safe from violence and abuse.

WHEREAS, The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was developed with the input of advocates from around the country and from all walks of life, and addresses the real and most important needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. VAWA is responsive, streamlined, and constitutionally and fiscally sound, while providing strong accountability measures and appropriate federal government oversight; and

WHEREAS, VAWA represents the voices of women and their families, and the voices of victims, survivors, and advocates; and

WHEREAS, VAWA was first enacted in 1994, and has been the centerpiece of the federal government's efforts to stamp out domestic and sexual violence. Critical programs authorized under VAWA include support for victim services, transitional housing, and legal assistance; and

WHEREAS, Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, once considered private matters to be dealt with behind closed doors, have been brought out of the darkness; and

WHEREAS, VAWA has been successful because it has had consistently strong, bipartisan support for nearly two decades; and

WHEREAS, The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2011 will provide a five-year reauthorization for VAWA programs, and reduce authorized funding levels by more than \$144 million, or 19 percent, from the law's 2005 authorization; and

WHEREAS, While annual rates of domestic violence have dropped more than 50 percent, domestic violence remains a serious issue. Every day in the United States, three women are killed by abusive husbands and partners. In California in 2010, there were 166,361 domestic violence calls, including more than 65,000 that involved a weapon; and

WHEREAS, The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2011 includes several updates and improvements to the law, including the following:

(a) An emphasis on the need to effectively respond to sexual assault crime by adding new purpose areas and a 25 percent set-aside in the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program (STOP Program) and the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program.

(b) Improvements in tools to prevent domestic violence homicides by training law enforcement, victim service providers, and court personnel to identify and manage high-risk offenders and connecting high-risk victims to crisis intervention services.

(c) Improvements in responses to the high rate of violence against women in tribal communities by strengthening concurrent tribal criminal jurisdiction over perpetrators who assault Indian spouses and dating partners in Indian countries.

(d) Measures to strengthen housing protections for victims by applying existing housing protections to nine additional federal housing programs.

(e) Measures to promote accountability to ensure that federal funds are used for their intended purposes.

(f) Consolidation of programs and reductions in authorization levels to address fiscal concerns, and renewed focus on programs that have been most successful.

(g) Technical corrections to update definitions throughout the law to provide uniformity and continuity; and

WHEREAS, There is a need to maintain services for victims and families at the local, state, and federal levels. Reauthorization would allow existing programs to continue uninterrupted, and would provide for the development of new initiatives to address key areas of concern. These initiatives include the following:

(a) Addressing the high rates of domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault among women 16 to 24 years of age, inclusive, by combating tolerant youth attitudes toward violence.

(b) Improving the response to sexual assault with best practices, training, and communication tools for law enforcement, as well as health care and legal professionals.

(c) Preventing domestic violence homicides through enhanced training for law enforcement, advocates, and others who interact with those at risk. A growing number of experts agree that these homicides are predictable, and therefore preventable, if we know the warning signs; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature calls on the United States Congress to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2011, Senate Bill No. 1925, authored by Senators Leahy and Crapo, and ensure the sustainability of vital programs designed to keep women and families safe from violence and abuse; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate,

each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States, and to the author for appropriate distribution.

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